



Ontario

■ OVERVIEW

In Ontario, early learning and child care (ELCC), which includes kindergarten, child care centres, before- and after-school child care and regulated family child care (termed home-based child care) is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

Kindergarten includes full school-day kindergarten for all four- and five-year-olds (termed junior and senior). Neither year is compulsory. Ontario publicly funds “public” and Catholic (termed “separate”) school systems, both of which deliver kindergarten.

The Ministry of Education licenses and regulates child care programs, which include full-day child care centres, nursery schools, family child care, licensed before- and after-school child care and Extended Day, and Authorized Recreation and Skill Building (not licensed) before- and after-school programs.

All forms of licensed, regulated, and authorized child care may be delivered by non-profit, for-profit, and public operators. Ontario has a long history of delivering municipally operated child care, but this sector has been considerably reduced over the past decade. Non-profit organizations operate a majority of centres and home child care agencies, with for-profit operators, Indigenous governing bodies, and a small municipally delivered sector making up the rest of provision. For-profit provision accounts for 43% of full-day spaces.

For programs enrolled in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system, parent fees for children under the age of six were reduced in two phases: up to 25% on April 1, 2022 to a minimum of \$12/day, and a second reduction of up to 37% (for a total of 52.75%) to a minimum of \$12/day.

Parent fee subsidies are managed by 47 municipal entities and may be used in all licensed, regulated, or authorized child care services.

In January 2024, Ontario introduced [wage enhancements](#) for registered early childhood educators (RECEs) employed by CWELCC-participating child care operators, which raises starting wages and expands eligibility for annual increases. Ontario does not yet have a wage grid.

Ontario is the sole province/territory with a mandated role for municipal level government entities. These 47 entities are termed Service System Managers (SSMs). SSMs have administrative responsibility for child care provision within provincial policy. They administer public funding, play a planning role, develop local initiatives, manage expansion, and may provide publicly delivered child care. The provincial government flows funding, including federal transfer payment funding, to SSMs, which in turn direct it to service providers.

Ontario signed the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Multilateral Framework Agreement) on June 16, 2017. This allocated \$434.6 million over three years to Ontario for regulated child care; it was extended on June 9, 2020 with an additional \$146 million for the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, and extended again in August 2021 providing between \$146 million and \$211 million per year from 2021 to 2025.

The Canada-Ontario CWELCC agreement was signed by Ontario on March 27, 2022, allocating \$10.2 billion over five years. This Canada-wide agreement does not replace but runs parallel to the Multilateral Framework Agreement.

Net growth in full-day centre spaces for children 0 – 5 years since CWELCC			
	2021	2023	Increase (decrease) 2021 – 2023
For-profit	75,798	83,760	+7,962
Non-profit and public	104,960	110,592	+5,632
Total full-day spaces	180,758	194,352	+13,594
Percentage of full-day spaces that were for-profit	42%	43%	+1.2%
Percentage of growth of full-day spaces that was for-profit			59%

Family child care spaces (2021, 2023)		
	2021	2023
Full-day active family child care spaces (enrolment)	10,112	13,955

■ PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Some of the following figures are rounded, while totals are based on exact figures and may therefore not equal the sum of the rounded figures.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0	123,400
1	138,600
2	137,400
3	151,500
4	140,300
5	153,700
6	151,100
7	151,900
8	154,000
9	159,500
10	167,600
11	159,300
12	165,000
Total	1,953,500

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0 – 2	399,400
3 – 5	445,500
6 – 12	1,108,400
Total	1,953,500

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0	84,000
1	96,900
2	92,100
3	101,100
4	93,600
5	106,000
6	98,400
7	107,400
8	104,500
9	107,000
10	116,400
11	109,500
12	113,900
Total	1,330,800

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0 – 2	273,000
3 – 5	300,700
6 – 12	757,100
Total	1,330,800

Number of children 0 – 14 years identifying with an Indigenous group (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>First Nations</i>	<i>Métis</i>	<i>Inuk (Inuit)</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Other</i>
0 – 4	18,155	7,330	310	580	460
5 – 9	21,125	8,280	425	690	515
10 – 14	21,915	9,410	395	635	575
Total	61,195	25,020	1,130	1,905	1,550

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age of youngest child</i>	<i>Number of mothers</i>	<i>Participation rate (%)</i>
0 – 3	328,600	78.1
4 – 5	129,300	80.4
0 – 5	458,000	78.7
6 – 12	406,900	83.9

Living arrangements by age of child by number of parents (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Living with two parents</i>	<i>Living with one parent</i>	<i>Lone mother</i>	<i>Lone father</i>
0 – 4	578,270	97,760	82,335	15,425
5 – 9	611,565	143,405	117,815	25,590
10 – 14	613,500	178,180	144,170	34,005

Languages spoken most often at home (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Non-official</i>	<i>Multiple</i>
0 – 4	542,240	13,030	92,665	35,135
5 – 9	629,635	15,710	72,100	46,705
10 – 14	665,790	15,635	69,820	52,170
Total	1,837,665	44,380	234,590	134,025

Median after-tax income among families with children 0 – 5 years (2020)

<i>Two-parent families</i>	<i>Male lone parent</i>	<i>Female lone parent</i>
\$106,000	\$52,400	\$48,000

KINDERGARTEN

Full school-day kindergarten enrolment (2023)

Enrolment in public and Catholic schools

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	132,799
Kindergarten for 4-year-olds	123,895

Enrolment in independent/private schools

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	8,687
Kindergarten for 4-year-olds	8,072

Total kindergarten enrolment	273,453
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FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CHILD CARE

First Nations child care on reserves

Ontario regulates child care in First Nations communities on reserve.

In March 2023, there were 75 licensed child care centres on First Nations reserves, operating 71 full-day programs and 27 before- and after-school programs. Seventy-four of the 75 centres were operated by First Nations governing bodies, accounting for 2,648 full-day and 680 before- and after-school spaces.

Licensed spaces on reserve

Full-day	2,717
Before- and after-school	680

Total licensed spaces	3,397
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Note: Full-day spaces may include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces.

There were two licensed home child care agencies overseeing 31 child care homes on First Nations reserves.

Ontario licenses Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (AHSOR) programs. In 2023, there were 123 AHSOR programs in Ontario.

Indigenous child care other than on reserves

In 2023, 53 off-reserve child care centres self-reported as Indigenous-led. Of these centres, 48 offered full-day child care and 21 offered before- and after-school programs.

Licensed spaces not on reserve

Full-day	2,069
Before- and after-school	927

Total licensed spaces	2,996
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Note: Full-day spaces may include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces.

In most cases, Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) programs are licensed in Ontario and are Indigenous-led. In 2023, there were 14 AHSUNC programs operating in Ontario.

CHILD CARE SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated spaces (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centre spaces

Infants (<18 months)	15,715
Toddlers (18 months – <30 months)	53,894
Preschool-age (30 months – <6 years)	123,731

Total full-day centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years)	193,340
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Note: Full-day spaces include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces.

Part-day centre spaces

Part-day centres (nursery school)	Not available
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Other centre spaces

Family-age (multi-age grouping 0 – 12 years)	1,012
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Before- and after-school care centre spaces (licensed, regulated, approved, or authorized)

Children in kindergarten (44 months – <7 years)	123,014
Children in Grades 1 – 6	187,689

Total before- and after-school care spaces	310,703
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Total centre spaces (children 0 – 12 years)	505,055
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Regulated family child care (enrolment)

Full-day (children not yet in school)	13,955
Part-day (children attending school)	2,941

Total regulated family child care spaces	16,896
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TOTAL REGULATED SPACES

(centre spaces and family child care enrolment)	521,951
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Note: Space data is as of December 31, 2022.

Number of child care centres, family child care homes, and agencies (March 31, 2023)

Centre-based child care

Total number of centres	5,776
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Centre-based programs

Number of centres providing a full-day program	3,501
Number of centres providing a part-day (nursery school or preschool) program	848
Number of centres providing a part-day program (before- and after-school) for children attending school (approximately 4 – 12 years)	3,922
Number of school-operated Extended Day programs for kindergarten-age children	183
Number of before- and after-school programs that are approved or recognized, not licensed	196
Number of centres providing infant care (<18 months)	1,484
Number of centres providing toddler care (18 months – <30 months)	2,928
Number of centres providing preschool-age care (30 months – 6 years)	3,681
Number of centres providing non-standard hours care (non-standard hours as defined by the province)	486
Number of centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (K – 12)	3,190

Regulated family child care

Number of individual family child care homes (active)	3,524
Number of family child care agencies	148

Participation in CWELCC

Number of child care centres	5,176
Number of family child care agencies	135

Note: Provision for children older than 0 – 5 years in school-age centres is not eligible for CWELCC funding.

Municipal delivery

Number of municipalities or municipal entities operating child care centres (i.e. are the licence holder)

14

Note: For consistency with previous reporting, this number reflects only those operated directly by SSMs as of March 31, 2023 (that is, it does not include lower-tier municipalities).

Auspice

Full- and part-day programs by auspice (2023)

	<i>Number of centres</i>
For-profit	1,448
Non-profit and public	4,328

Note: Public centres include 109 operated by municipalities, 184 by school authorities, and 74 by Indigenous governing bodies.

Centre spaces by auspice

	<i>Full-day</i>	<i>BASC¹</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	83,760	22,981	106,741
Non-profit and public	110,592	287,722	398,314

¹ Before- and after-school care (children 4 – 12 years).

Note: Full-day spaces include a relatively small number of part-day nursery school spaces. Public spaces include 4,271 full-day and 1,981 before- and after-school spaces operated by municipalities, 136 full-day and 22,264 before- and after-school spaces operated by school authorities, and 2,648 full-day and 680 before- and after-school spaces operated by Indigenous governing bodies.

Family child care agencies

For-profit	36
Non-profit and public	112

Note: Public agencies include 13 operated by municipalities and two by Indigenous governing bodies.

Fee subsidies

Number of children receiving fee subsidies (March 31, 2023)

Full subsidy	43,189
Partial subsidy	40,221

Total children receiving fee subsidies 83,410

Note: Data as of December 31, 2022.

Disability support

Special needs/disability support (March 31, 2021)

Children in licensed child care receiving special needs/disability support funding	37,508
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Note: More recent data are not available.

CHILD CARE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Number of children enrolled in regulated centre-based programs (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centres

Infants (<18 months)	12,017
Toddlers (18 months – <30 months)	44,353
Preschool-age (30 months – <6 years)	86,477

Part-day centres

Infants (<18 months)	157
Toddlers (18 months – <30 months)	1,228
Preschool-age (30 months – <6 years)	10,242

Other (where age breakdowns are not available)

Family-age (multi-age grouping 0 – 12 years)	590
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Total centre enrolment (children 0 – 5 years) 155,064

Before- and after-school care (licensed, regulated, approved, or authorized)

Children in kindergarten (44 months – <7 years)	59,507
Children in Grades 1 – 6	92,737

Total number of children in kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school care 152,244

TOTAL CENTRE ENROLMENT (children 0 – 12 years)

307,308

Note: All enrolment data as of December 31st, 2022.

PARENT FEES

Ontario does not have set fees. Parent fees are determined by the market system, with the province limiting fee increases. Ontario's approach to reaching the federal fee reduction target is having each provider reduce fees by a percentage value.

Full-time median monthly fees for centres and family child care homes in Ontario (2021, 2023)

	Full-time median monthly fee (2021)	Full-time median monthly fee (2023)
Brampton		
Infant	\$1,638	\$774
Toddler	\$1,309	\$619
Preschool-age	\$1,150	\$561
Hamilton		
Infant	\$1,472	\$666
Toddler	\$1,194	\$583
Preschool-age	\$1,023	\$499
Kitchener		
Infant	\$1,253	\$626
Toddler	\$1,139	\$520
Preschool-age	\$1,072	\$512

	<i>Full-time median monthly fee</i> (2021)	<i>Full-time median monthly fee</i> (2023)
London		
Infant	\$1,269	\$625
Toddler	\$1,215	\$605
Preschool-age	\$1,085	\$523
Markham		
Infant	\$1,475	\$818
Toddler	\$1,302	\$656
Preschool-age	\$1,200	\$600
Mississauga		
Infant	\$1,530	\$768
Toddler	\$1,318	\$623
Preschool-age	\$1,194	\$550
Oakville		
Infant	\$1,584	\$791
Toddler	\$1,378	\$666
Preschool-age	\$1,248	\$617
Ottawa		
Infant	\$1,020	\$521
Toddler	\$1,254	\$615
Preschool-age	\$1,031	\$519
Richmond Hill		
Infant	\$1,479	\$780
Toddler	\$1,327	\$673
Preschool-age	\$1,200	\$570
Toronto		
Infant	\$1,948	\$903
Toddler	\$1,615	\$725
Preschool-age	\$1,300	\$637

	<i>Full-time median monthly fee</i> (2021)	<i>Full-time median monthly fee</i> (2023)
Vaughan		
Infant	\$1,550	\$780
Toddler	\$1,327	\$656
Preschool-age	\$1,199	\$625
Windsor		
Infant	\$998	\$472
Toddler	\$890	\$410
Preschool-age	\$792	\$374

Note: These median monthly figures include fees from centre-based child care and regulated family child care.

Sources: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2023). *Measuring Matters: Assessing Canada's progress toward \$10-a-day child care for all*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2022). *Game Changer: Will provinces and territories meet the new federal child care fee targets? Canadian child care fees 2021*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

■ WORKFORCE

In January 2024, Ontario introduced [wage enhancements](#) for registered early childhood educators (RECEs) employed by CWELCC-participating child care operators, which raises starting wages and expands eligibility for annual increases. Ontario does not yet have a wage grid.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (Fiscal year 2022 – 2023)

The funding figures in each category represent provincial spending, which may include both provincial funds and federal funds transferred under bilateral agreements, Canada-wide ELCC agreements, or other federal programs used for early learning and child care.

Fee subsidies

Total fee subsidies	\$617,451,792
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Note: These are fee subsidies in licensed, regulated, or approved child care. The subsidies are associated with an individual child and family. There are provincial eligibility criteria. Fee subsidies are sent to service providers, not to parents.

Operational funding

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Operating funds	\$622,352,484
Wage Enhancement/ Home Child Care Enhancement	\$206,169,485
Special Needs Resourcing	\$121,649,948
Small Water Works	\$231,533
Territory Without Municipal Organization	\$1,258,428
CWELCC (Fee Reduction and Workforce Compensation)	\$1,276,743,000
CWELCC (Implementation)	\$205,575
CWELCC (Municipal Administration)	\$24,831,994
Total operational funding	\$2,253,442,447

Note: Operational funding includes regularly paid public funding that contributes to the ongoing operation of the child care service. It may include: operating grants or formula-based funding, family child care agency operating funds, wage grants/enhancement, special needs funding, and other grants/funding that is paid on a recurring basis.

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Capital for communities	\$1,975,567
Capital for school-based child care	\$74,862,871
French language schools	\$3,859,228

One-time funding – other

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Transitional Grant	\$85,500,002
Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce funds	\$75,014,128
Total one-time funding	\$241,211,796

Note: One-time funding is paid occasionally or just once to a child care service and is not part of the regular operating budget. It may include: major capital, minor capital, start up, one-time equipment, or repair funding.

Municipal contribution (Funds contributed by CMSM/DSSAB to regulated child care)

Total municipal contribution	\$232,611,803
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TOTAL SPENDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE

(fee subsidies, operational funding, and one-time funding)	\$3,344,717,838
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Other ELCC funding

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Ontario Childcare Access and Relief from Expenses (CARE) Tax Credit	\$386,231,800
EarlyON Centre funding	\$171,148,791
Qualifications Upgrade Program	\$5,500,000
Funding for child care associations	\$1,819,606
Total other funding	\$564,700,197

Federal transfers to Ontario

<i>Federal transfer</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements	\$195,934,000
Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care	\$1,680,917,000
Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce	\$75,010,963

Note: The federal transfers above represent the funds allocated to Ontario for fiscal year 2022 – 2023. This amount is slightly different from the Ontario amount in its original Agreement as these amounts are updated in line with population estimates on an annual basis. Ontario reported spending \$1,272,362,994 of its CWELCC transfer, carrying over \$409 million from this federal fund into 2023 – 2024.

Note: The Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce transfer is the amount of funding carried forward from 2021 – 2022 from the Canada-Ontario Early Childhood Workforce Agreement.

Source: Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Employment and Social Development Canada (2024).
